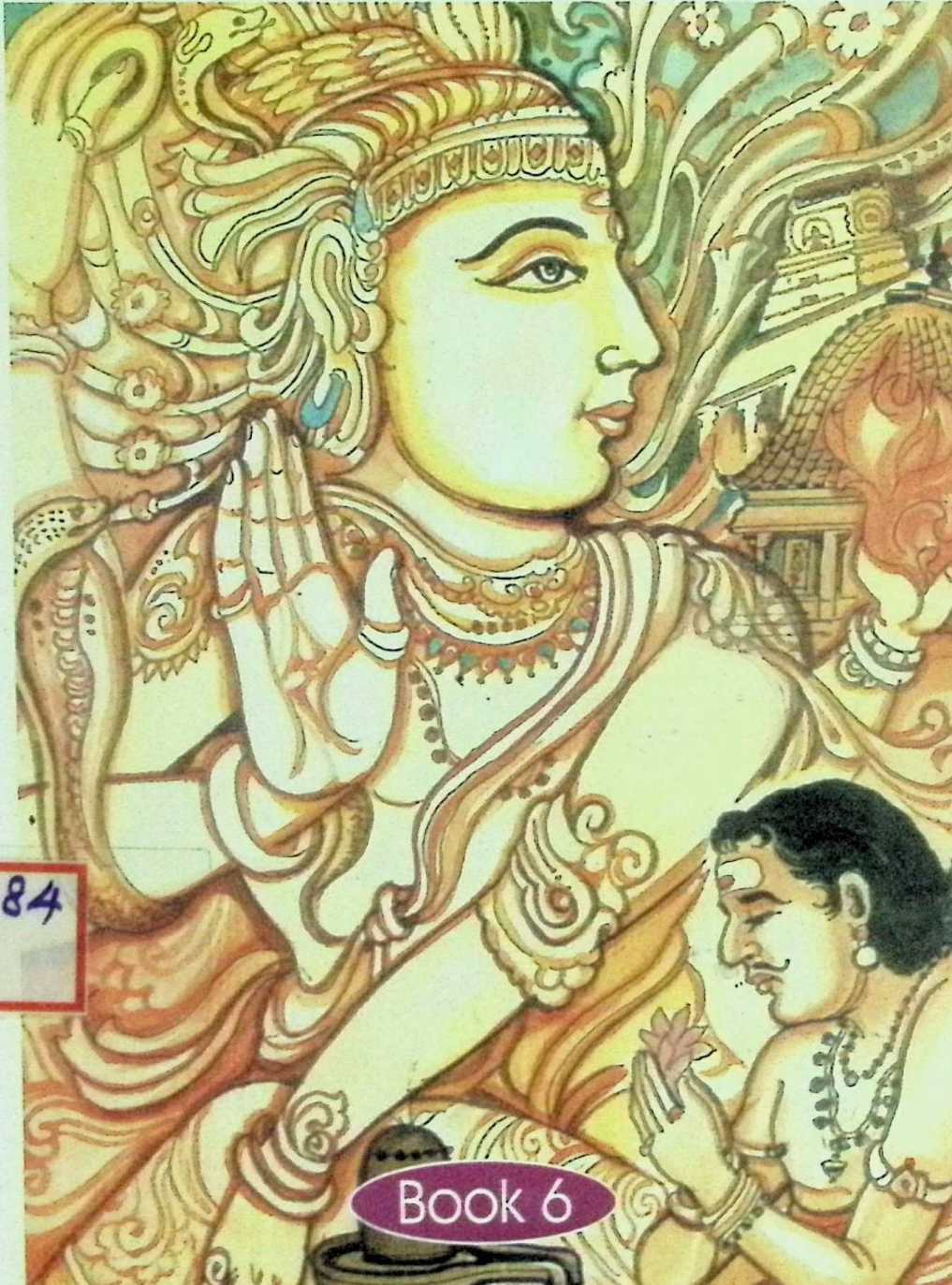


STORIES OF 63 SAINTS OF SOUTH INDIA



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Book 6

STORIES OF 63 SAINTS OF SOUTH INDIA

The Stories of this Book

KAZHARITRARIVAR
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Book 6



KAZHARITRARIVAR

In the Chera Kingdom there was a well known wealthy town called Kodunkolur the capital of the Cheras otherwise called Kodais. There was abundance in the air; arts and culture reigned the town. People were religious and righteous. There was a man called Perumakkodai, who was quite magnanimous by nature, ascetic and altruistic at heart. He had enshrined Siva in his mind and served Siva at Tiruvanjaikalam temple and took care of the premises. It was then that the Chera King relinquished his crown and took to "tapasya"; the ministers chose Perumakkodai and requested him to be their ruler. Perumakkodai, who had no interest in the material world, believed that everything was the will of God and waited for the God Himself to direct him, since faith has always been answered.

Lord Siva directed him to rule over the land, maintain justice and blessed Perumakkodai with the knowledge of reading the inner mind of the people and understanding all spoken languages and sounds of even the birds and animals. Hence he was called Kazharitrarivar (meaning faultless knower of minds and words) Kazharitrarivar was also granted the needs of an ideal king, the invincible power, strength, the virtue of liberal giving, strong victorious army and he agreed to rule over the country. As he was returning to the place on the state elephant, he saw a washerman soiled entirely by white earth. Assuming that to be the holy ash the king got down from the state elephant and saluted him; this piety moved his ministers and citizens.

He established and maintained very cordial relationship with the Chola Pandya kings. Once a Siva devotee from Madurai, named Panabadra prayed to God for relief from poverty and got a



recommendation letter from the God Himself to Cheraman Perumal. Cheraman Perumal (Perumakkodai) also heard the voice of Siva directing him to help Panabadra. Cheraman Perumal was overwhelmed to read God's own letter addressed to him, kept it in his private shrine, where he did his everyday Puja. He heaped the wealth before Pana and requested him to help himself. But Pana was not greedy and so he took just enough for a reasonable living, Cheraman offered a lot more than what he took himself and sent him back to Madurai on the state elephant.

Once during his Puja to Siva, he heard the jingling feet of the Cosmic Dancer few minutes later than usual and when questioned the Lord answered him that He was too engrossed by the devotional hymns of Saint Sundarar. So Cheraman Perumal went straight to Chidambaram, found Saint Sundarar, greeted him and went on a holy pilgrimage with him to Madurai and other places and returned to Arur. Then Saint Sundarar accompanied Cheraman to Kodumkolor, where he enjoyed the royal patronage, returned to Tiru Arur only to join him back at Kodumkolor. They both spread the message of God to humanity and served them without any attachment to worldly ties and joined Siva at Kailash where the high mountains reverberate with his Holy Presence.



NARASINGA MUNAIAR



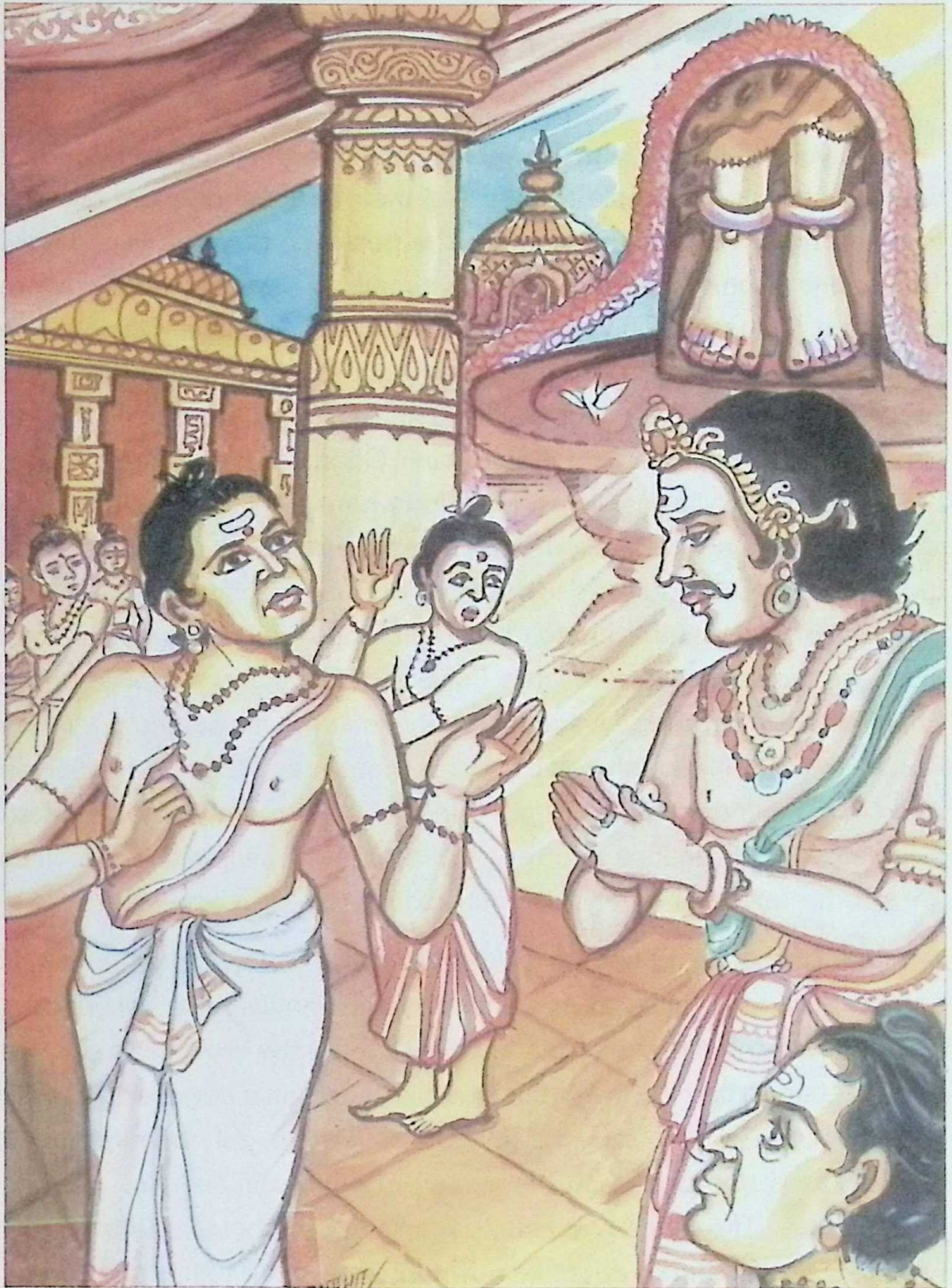
Narasinga Munaiar was an excellent ruler of Tirumunaipadi of South Arcot district and an ardent devotee of Lord Siva and his Bhaktas. He was a great patron of Saivism and found new roots in the hearts of the people. He was a foster parent of St. Sundarar. He celebrated the festivals in a grand manner to inculcate the spirit of the religion. He fed the Siva Bhaktas at large during Tiruvadirai festival and gave them each a hundred gold

pieces. On one of those occasions of man, who was not truly a Siva devotee but a liar, lewd loafer and sinner applied ashes on his body and entered the hall of ceremonies. When everybody shied away from his contact Narasinga saw him, got off his throne, greeted him in salutation and offered him twice the regular gold. The ash faced hypocrite felt small and tried to live a reformed life in the love of God. Narasinga's loving sympathy gave a new impetus to Saivism.

KUTRUVA NAYANAR

Even as one finger does not resemble the other, one's way of devotion and love varies but ultimately it is the love and devotion that matter and not the approach. Kutru in Tamil means Death. There was a strong willed, strong bodied hero who even dared death to serve the devotee. He took the law in his own hands, ably commanded cars, elephants, horses and infantry to maintain justice and peace in his domain Tiru Kalandai. He constantly sought the immense power of Siva to govern him. Overweighed by his personal triumphs he wished to be identified as the king and asked the priests of the Golden Temple at Thillai to crown him. The priests refused his demand on the grounds that they were used to crowning the Chola kings alone and took refuge in the Chera kingdom leaving only one family at Chidambaram for the temple service. This happened to be the turning point in his attitude to life and devotion to God. He realised that mere power alone could not achieve everything. He sought forgiveness at the feet of Nataraja and sincerely prayed to Him to crown him with His uplifted feet. God in His kindness granted his wish. Kutruva Nayanar lived long to maintain a very peaceful and prosperous country. His single-minded devotion finally won him Moksha.





PUGAL CHOLA NAYANAR

Uraiyur near Trichy was the ancient capital of the Chola kingdom. It was famous for its temple towers and their national emblem on their flag, the tiger, was etched even on the peaks of the high Himalayas. Trade and commerce flourished: simplicity and sincerity were cherished. Pugazh Cholan, a descendant of Anabaya Cholan, the patron of Chekkizhar, unified the dynasty under his umbrella; there was peace and plenty in his land. He shifted his capital to Karur to centralise his administration. His chieftains from Coorg and the West Coast brought him rich tributes. In a civilisation where the king was deified, he was a noble king who ruled with a great sense of duty and total detachment. As already told in the story of Eripatta Nayanar, this is the king who offered to have his head severed for the cause of justice, when his state elephant scattered the flowers of Sivakami Andar kept for Puja. He ever breathed Siva and served justice to his subjects. When Adigan of Malai Nadu refused to pay his tributes and thought himself as invincible and indomitable, Pugazh Cholan in the name of God wanted to correct his arrogance and regain the order of civic discipline. His army returned triumphantly, with rich spoils and severed heads.

One of the slain heads had matted hair and holy ashes smeared across. The king felt a great sin had been committed. He convened a meeting with the ministers, handed over his son the crown and sceptre advising him to carry on with the administration as a service to people and duty to God. He raised a holy pyre, held the ash smeared head above his head and uttering the name of the Lord in his mind, walked into the fire. The Gods and angels from the sky showered flowers of blessings on him and he obtained eternal peace at the feet of the Lord.

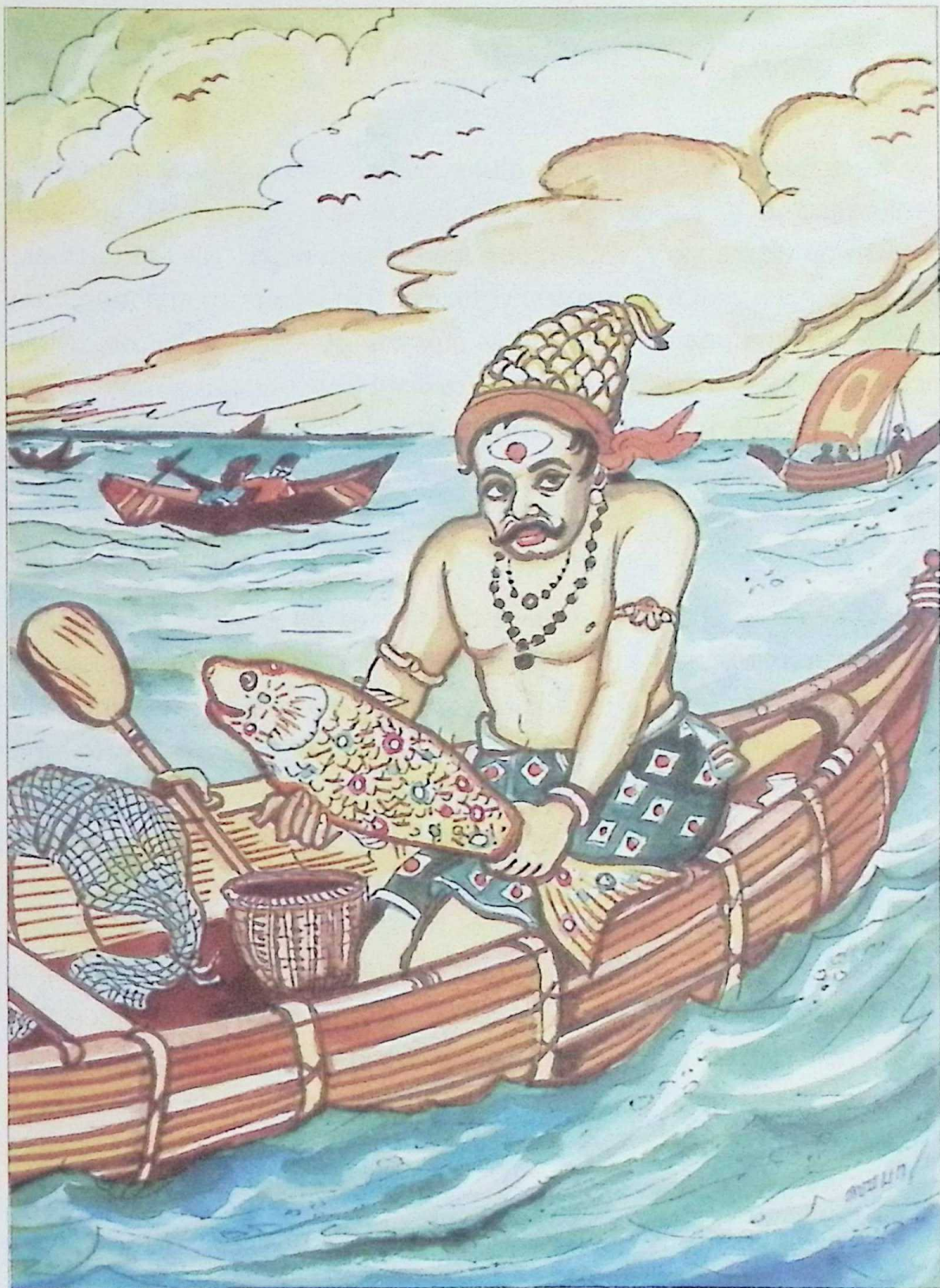


ADIPATTA NAYANAR

Nagapattinam is a rich seaport where the Cauvery river joins the sea. Along the seashore, in a small fishing village lived a fisherman called Adipattan. He was a sincere devotee of Lord Siva and offered the best fish of his catch back to the sea as a rule to thank God. That was his style of prayer and thanks giving, which he followed most sincerely. Even if he caught only one fish, he devotedly offered the same to the sea, without second thoughts. There were times when he could not get more than one fish and so he went without supper.

Once it happened that for many days in a row he could not get more than a fish; the test of destiny was on. One of those days the net was very heavy. When he hauled the net he found a golden fish studded with rich gems and diamonds. Adipatta was steadfast in his principles. He was not tempted by the gold and diamonds, but returned the only catch back to the sea offering his prayers to God. The Heavens themselves showered flowers of blessings on him and the God's grace too.

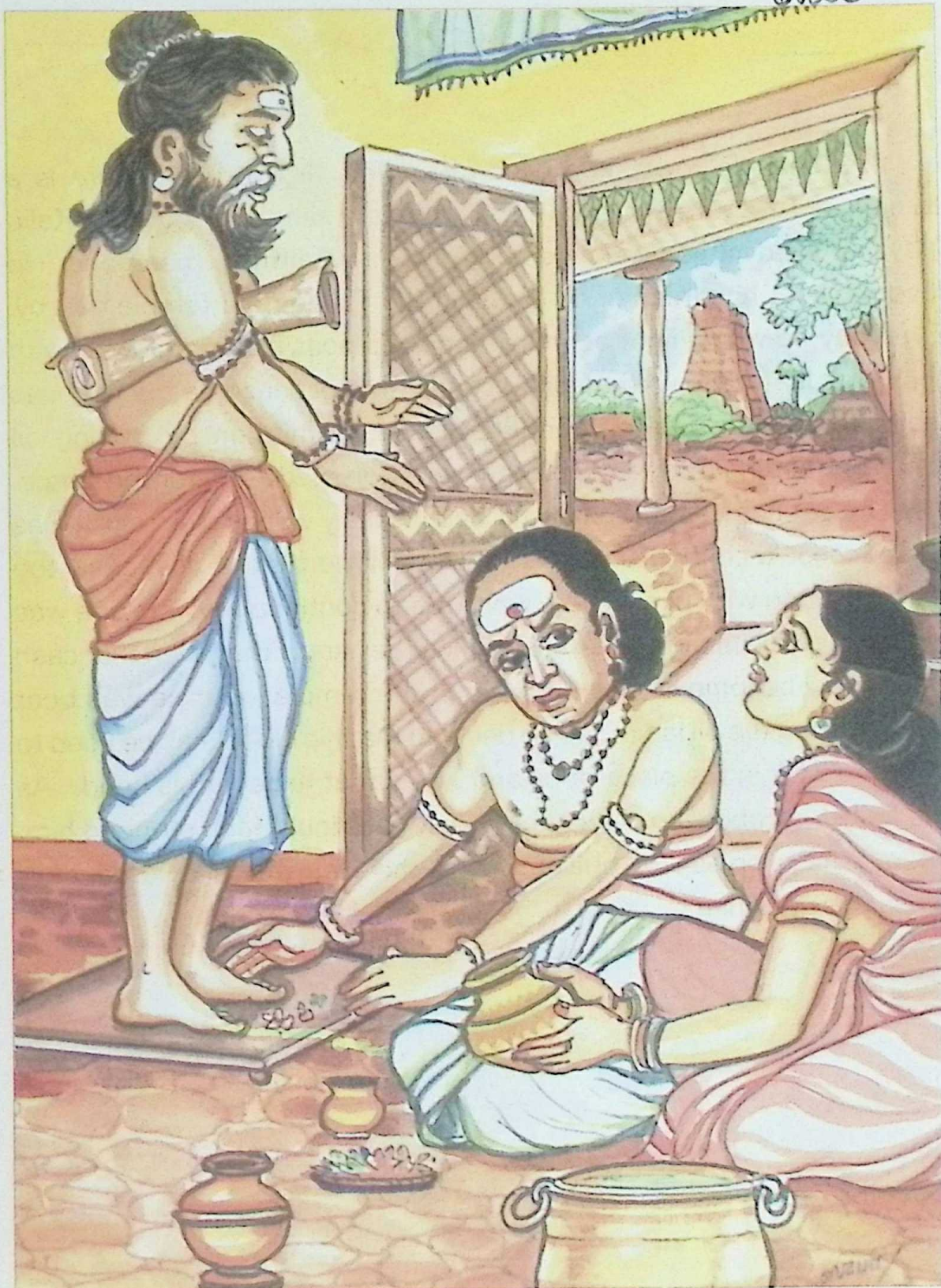




KALIKAMBA NAYANAR

It is said that sincerity alone pays. Arrogance, prejudice, negligence and indifference in service are disservice to God. Kalikamba was a very sincere service minded man. He took utmost pleasure in serving the devotees of Siva. He was born in a merchant family of Pennadam, a business centre of Cholanadu or Chola kingdom. Kalikamba was attached to Lord Siva of local temple called Tunganaimadam and took pleasure in serving the devotees of Siva. He served them by resting and washing their feet and feeding them with the choicest of dishes. Kalikamba had a servant with him who was terminated for some misconduct.

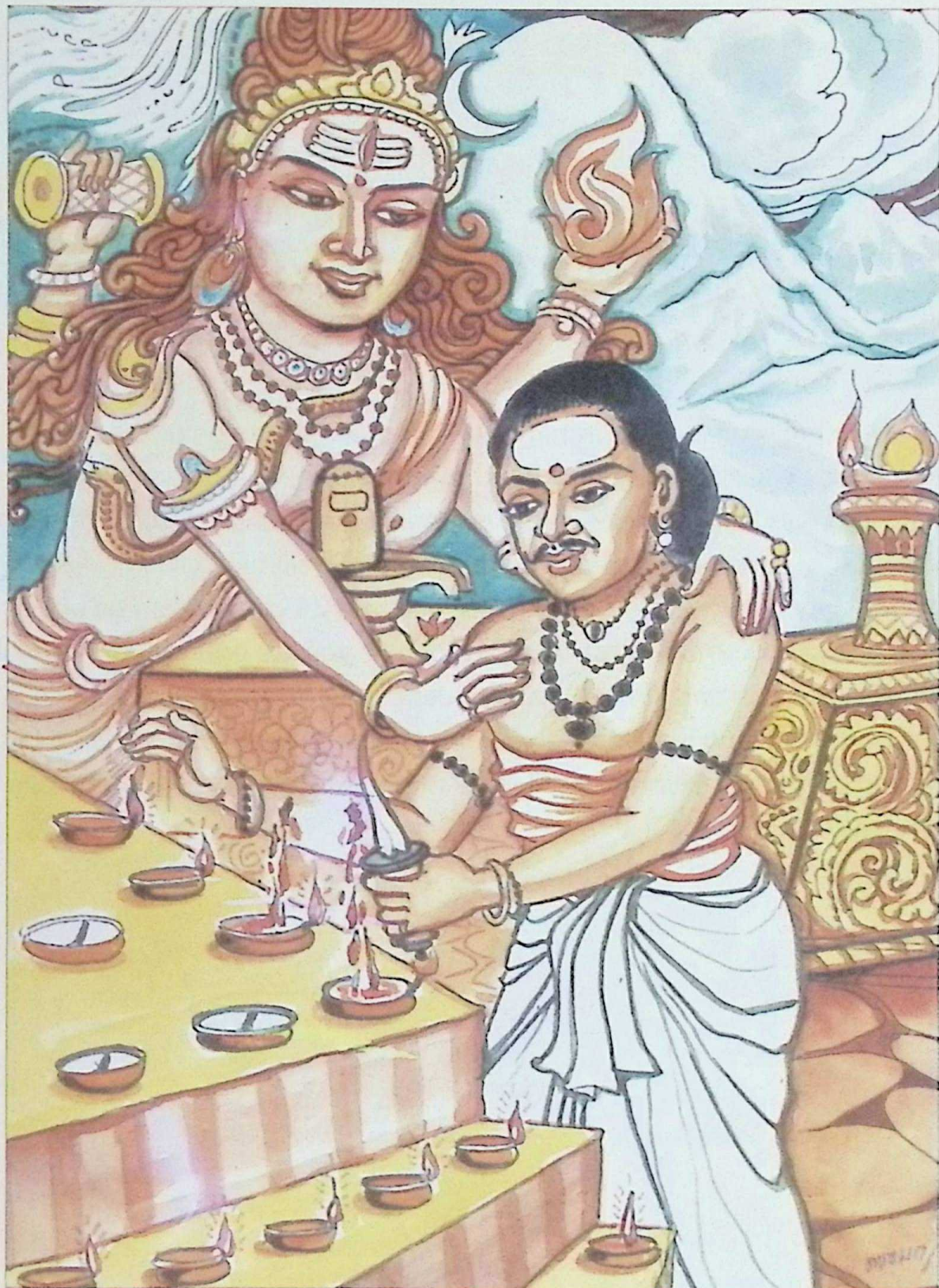
After years the same servant returned as a devotee of Siva, perhaps thanks to some transformation during his exile and Kalikamba was very happy to treat him as any other devotee of the Lord. He summoned his wife to assist him in his service. Kalikamba's wife who poured water as he cleaned the feet of the devotees normally, refused to do the same this time, as she could see that it was their earlier servant, who had come as the devotee. This physical identity and refusal to acknowledge the spirit of a devotee enraged Kalikambar. He immediately cut off her hands that refused service and the bleeding hand fell to the grounds jangling with bangles. He then continued to serve the devotees calmly with total attention and servitude, washing their feet and feeding them. There was no feeling of master and servant but they met as equals. The God was impressed by his single minded devotion to service and blessed him. Perhaps He also restored the hand of the wife so she may realise and continue her service to devotees by assisting her husband.



KALIA NAYANAR

In a seaside town near Madras, called Tiruvottriyur, there is a temple of Thyagaraja. Kalia Nayanar was a simple, good soul. Kalia Nayanar lived in the oil mongers street as a wealthy oil merchant. He loved to light hundreds of oil lamps in the Thyagaraja temple nearby. Everyday he would light as many lamps as possible and glowed with that joy. Naturally with much expense and less income his finances were dwindling. Still he continued with his mission by trading oil amongst merchants and the profits were siphoned as oil for the lamps. Then he got employed in an oil mill and his daily wages were earned as oil so he could continue with his mission uninterrupted. His family too starved along with him. There was little to continue life. No one was willing to give him oil or even cash, since they knew that even that cash would only become oil and be burnt in the temple. But he was bent upon burning the oil lamp. So he decided that his blood may be used to burn the wick in the place of oil and was about to sever his head. As the knife was about to slit his throat a Mysterious Hand stopped him. There was a splash of brilliance and the Heavens showered their Blessings upon him.



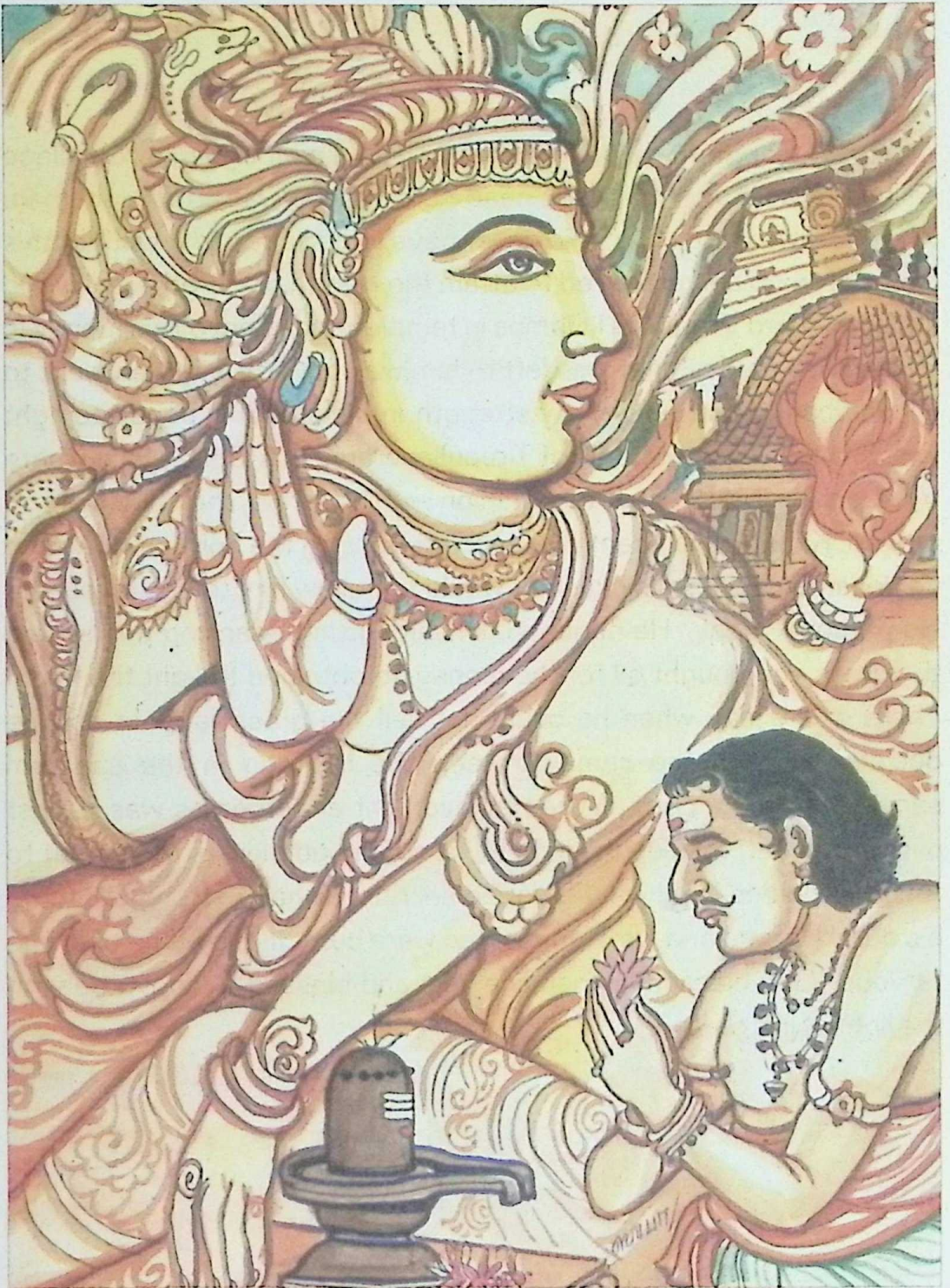


IYADIGAL KADAVAR KONE

Kadavars were Pallavas. Kone in Tamil meant king. Iyadigal was a good and powerful king of the Pallava dynasty, who conquered all his enemies and established a very powerful administration and peaceful kingdom. But the burden of the throne was weighing on his mind heavily and there was no peace for him. So he handed over his responsibilities to his son and dedicated his life to spirituality.

He went on a long pilgrimage to all the Siva temples of the South, met most of his contemporary devotees and composed many verses in the praise of the Lord. His Venba metered verses come next to that of Karaikal Ammaiyar as the eleventh Holy Book of Saivism. As he beckons us to surrender our spirit to Siva, the 24 verses read as under in their summary. 'Oh my good heart, before you are enfeebled by age, before your kith and kin are ready to usher you off this stage, may you surrender and end this dotage. Before eagles eat your flesh or let it rot on earth, find your home at the God's own feet. Before your health fails take refuge with God.

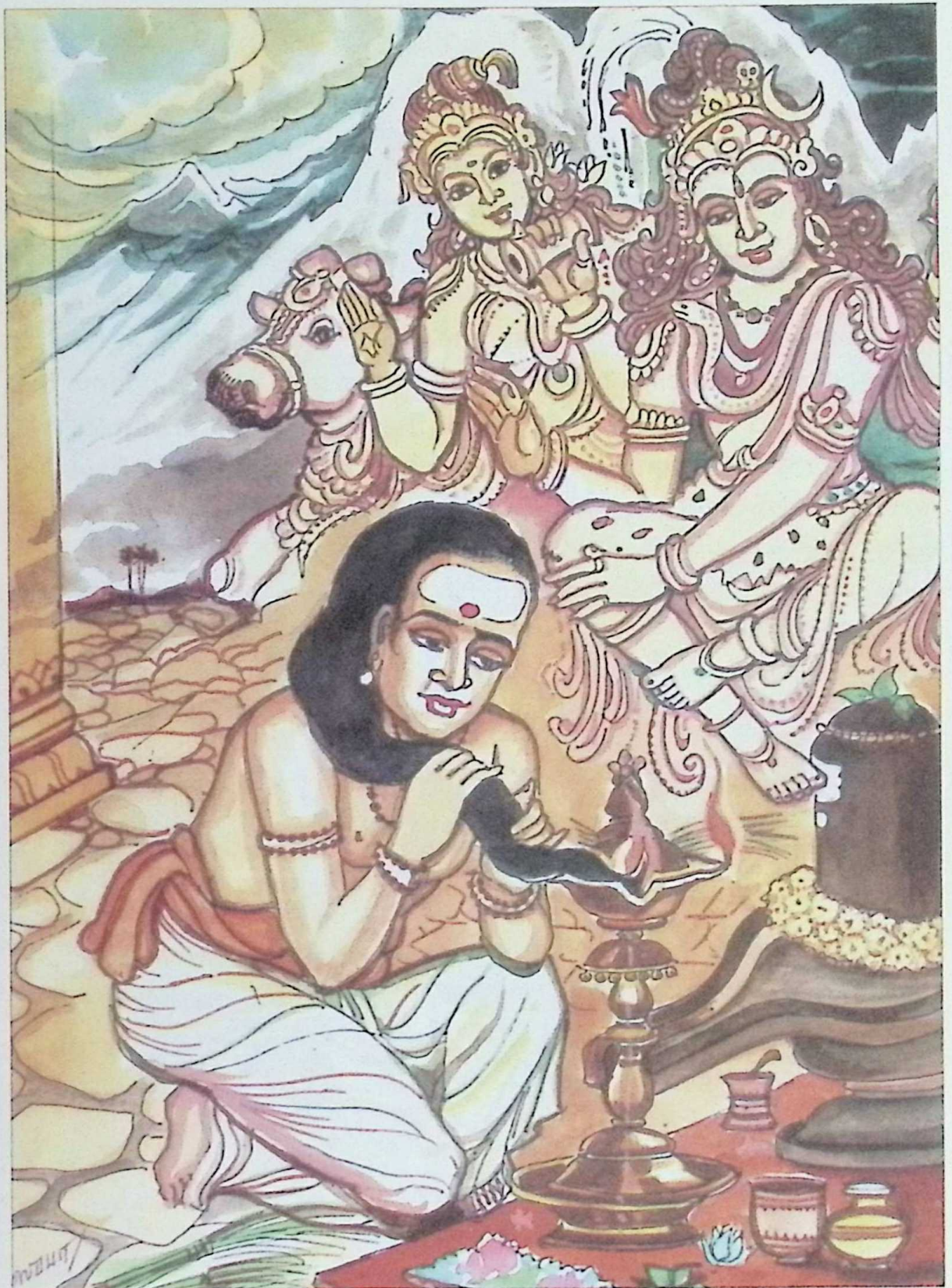




KANAMPULLA NAYANAR

In the southern bank of Vellaru was a small agricultural village called Irukki Velur. The village head Kanampullar was an affluent man, who was also very pious. He never gave importance to wealth of this material world and preferred to attain the wealth of the ethereal world under the Lord's feet. He lit lamps in temples and spent all his money in this service until all that was left to him was poverty. He then went to Chidambaram and felt a new strength in his soul. He began to light lamps in the nearby temple of Tirupuliavaram. This is the place where Vyagrapada lived in inner communion with Nataraja, the dancing form of Siva. Kanampulla spent all his money lighting the holy lamp. When he became penniless his dignity would not allow him to ask favour for his personal ideal. He engaged himself cutting, stacking and selling the grass and bought oil for the money he obtained to light the lamp. There was a day when he could not sell the grass faggots and he decided to burn the same to keep the light on in the sanctum sanctorum of the Lord. When by midnight all the grass was almost over and burnt, to keep the light on he continued pulling his hair out to feed the flames. Ah! what a daring sacrifice, what a strong will to do his duty! His ego and his 'Karmas' too were burnt in the flame of divine fervour. God blessed his genuine love and blessed His devotee with the light of His grace.





KARI NAYANAR

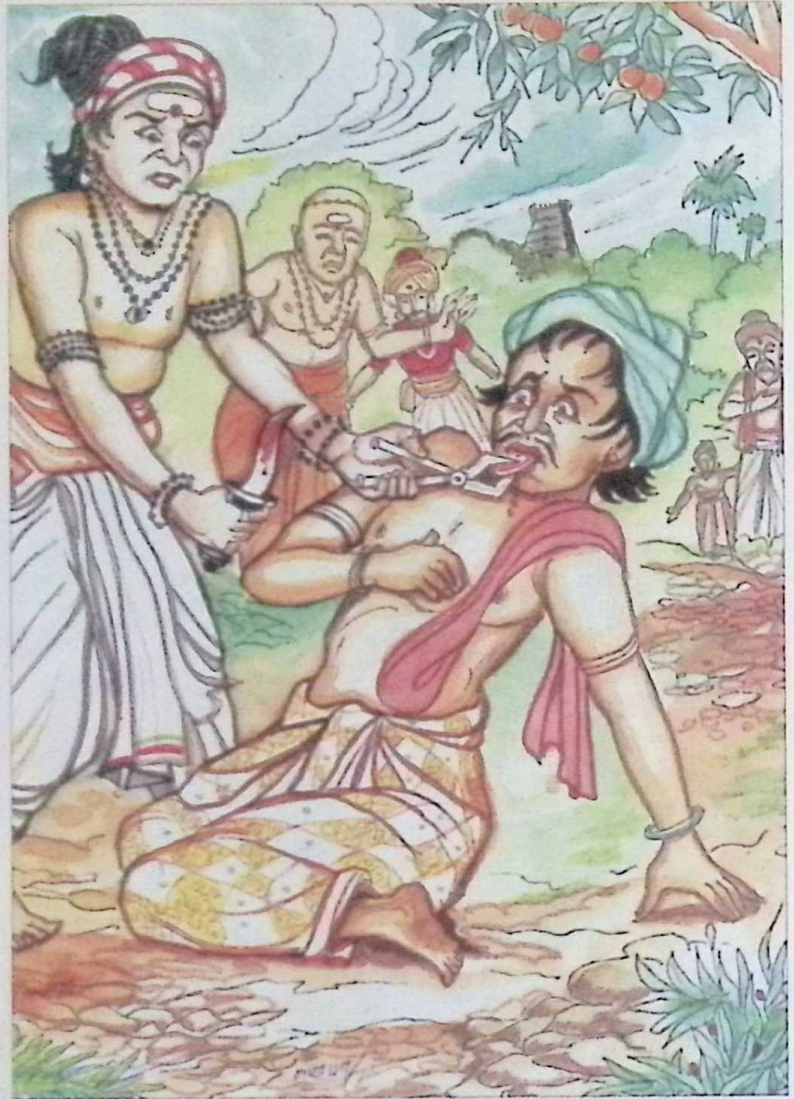
Kari Nayanar was a pious Brahmin well versed in Vedic lore. He lived in the famous pilgrim centre of Tiru Virattanam where Markandeyar attained immortality. He was a good poet of the Kovai style and recited them before the Chera, Chola and Pandya kings and also other affluent personalities and interpreted them with his rich imagination and intelligent words. He wrote a lot of love poems that led to the lotus feet of the Lord. When they gave him gifts of wealth he used them to build temples and fed the poor. His life was of sublime principles. He lived a simple life with love and devotion to the Lord and led others by example.





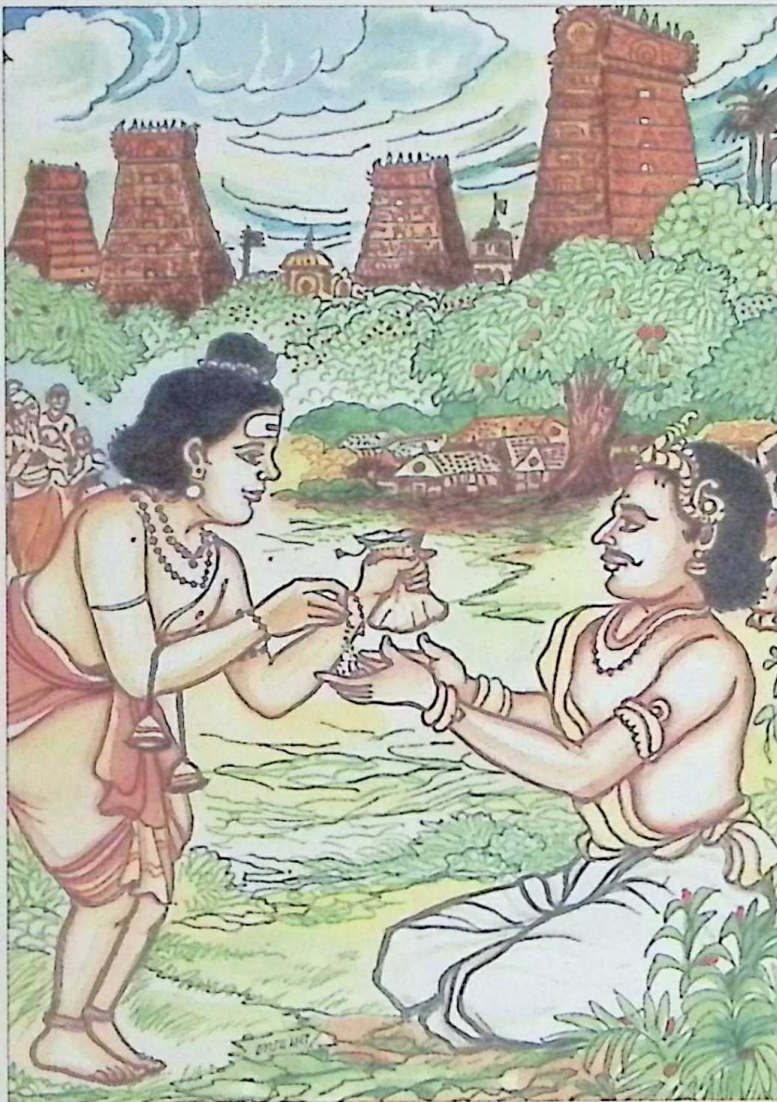
SHAKTI NAYANAR

Shakti NayanarIn the Cauvery delta of the Chola kingdom, near Nagapattinam, was an agricultural village called Virinjai. There was an ardent and aggressive devotee of Siva in Virinjai called Shakti Nayanar. Shakti means power in Tamil. Shakti Nayanar was personally a very strong man both in physical and mental attributes. He spoke of Siva and his devotees and loved to hear only good of them. Any untoward



comment about any devotee of Siva was immediately punished by Shakti Nayanar by severing the tongue that spoke ill. He believed that bad words only meant disloyalty and that should be stopped immediately. Though this sounds quite too serious the moral must be well taken.

NINRA SEER NEDUMARAR



Kunpandyan, a king at Madurai got this name as he was physically deformed name as he was physically deformed as a lunchback. Kun in tamil is referred to the lunch back. When he suffered a burning fever, with an incurable headache his wife and the prime minister sponsored the mission and applied the holy ashes given by Tirujnana Sambandar. The holy ash on application on the forehead instantly cured the incurable

disease of the king and he became a staunch Siva devotee.

Later when Jana Sambandar cured him of his lunch back by his Divine Touch and the king became straight backed. The majestic posse was aptly named in Tamil as Ninra Seer Nedumaran,. He became an example of spiritual nationalism and divine heroism.

VAYILAR NAYANAR



Vayilar in Tamil means the man with no voice. Yes, he was a dumb man of very simple means and livelihood. He lived in Mylapore, a seaside town of Madras with rich marine wealth and a home to many Vedic scholars and poets where he built a big temple for Siva with golden roofs, diamond pillars and silver walls. In the sanctum sanatorium shone a luminous Lingam adorned with rich gems. The temple was filled with the fragrance of flowers and

incense and with humming hymns. How did he accomplish this Himalayan task with his simple means? This is where the greatness of Vayilar stands unequalled. He built this in his heart in divine meditation and silent incantation. His Pujas were as regular as his heart beats. Isn't this the height of divinity? The simple and certain door to Heaven - your heart. His lonely imagination built a temple of serene love and sincere fervour. It was a temple for solitude, where his own mind was the priest.



STORIES OF 63 SAINTS OF SOUTH INDIA

The Periyapuram, delineating the lives of the 63 famous Saivite saints of Tamil Nadu, known popularly as the "Arupathumoonru Nayanmar," was written by Sekkizhar, a wise chief minister of the Chola kingdom. Since then these stories have been narrated by countless generations of scholars in the temples of Tamil Nadu, and retold in both Tamil and English.

The devotion of these saints to Lord Siva was all encompassing. They were prepared to sacrifice not only their material wealth but even their lives and those of their families in the service of the Lord and His devotees. The numerous verses composed by the 63 saints in praise of Lord Siva in the various temples of Tamil Nadu have stood the test of time. The life histories of these saints serve as a role model to young people, and speak of the importance of devotion to duty and commitment to society.

The present stories have been retold in simple English for the benefit of young readers in India and abroad by Kalpana Ramani, Asha Kannan and Bhama Chandran, and edited by Lakshmi Venkatraman. Every story is brought to life in the evocative illustrations of Subha. This book is the first in a series of eight volumes envisaged by the Koviloor Adinam Children's Book Trust.

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